

In this issue: The Environment, Community Organizations, Health, and more!

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Community Organization: The Covenant Soup Kitchen

Helpful and healthy, just and full of opportunities, the Covenant Soup Kitchen has it all. This important Willimantic organization helps the community in so many ways.

The Covenant Soup Kitchen is at Saint Paul's church. Since 1981, it has been helping food insecure people to be well nourished.

How Kids can get Involved

- Donate money or get your parents to.
- Donate non-perishable foods. There is a place inside the Willimantic Food co-op by the door where you can drop it off.
- Get you and your family over there and help! You might answer phone calls, help serve, work in the food pantry, or work in the kitchen.

The Environment: Locally-Produced Food

Do you want fresh, good food that has no chemicals in it? Well, there's a lot of really healthy, tasty food being produced right here on the farms in Mansfield, CT. For example, you can get fresh milk from Mountain Dairy or Foxfire Farm, Maple Syrup from Bailey's or Cedar Ledge, fresh beef from Thistle Springs Farm, and vegetables from many, many farms, like Shundahai right down the road from Mansfield Middle School.

Locally-produced food is important because it saves lots of gas and pollution that large trucks and ships make when they travel thousands of miles to transport food across the globe. It's also important because it supports our local economy by giving business to local farmers and their families. Finally, it's healthier for us to eat locally-grown food because it's fresh!



Photo from www.shundahaifarm.com

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Health Focus: Dehydration

Katie Cranmer, guest reporter.

Dehydration can affect everyone. Each year 300 children in the United States die of dehydration (due to gastroenteritis, a disease that causes vomiting and diarrhea) and 200,000 are hospitalized.

“Dehydration deprives your body of the water it needs to function properly,” says Dr. Anna Cranmer, an emergency doctor.

Says fifth-grader Emma Powers, “When I’m dehydrated, I get a really bad headache in the left side of my head. Sometimes I get chapped lips, too.” And those aren’t the only symptoms. Thirst, fatigue, dizziness, and confusion are all signs that you aren’t drinking enough.

So how can we stop ourselves from getting dehydrated? “Drink plenty of water, especially when it’s hot out, or you’re exercising,” says Dr. Cranmer. “Sweating takes a lot of your body’s water.”

So remember, drink lots of water!

Safety Focus: Bicycle Safety

Whoosh!! The feel of the wind against your face. Do you want to ruin that experience? Of course not. Learn about bicycle safety and you will never have to worry.

How to Handle Helmets

Helmets are very important. Every year about 300,000 kids go to the emergency room because of bicycle incidents, and lots of these were because the kids weren’t wearing helmets and damaged their brains. When you wear a helmet, you want it to fit. It must mold snugly onto your head so you can’t pull or twist the helmet. Keep the straps fastened all the time while you are riding. Also, bike helmets are not good after a major crash or fall, so

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Global Issue: Fair Trade

All around the world, there are many people who work but do not get paid well for their labor. However, there is a movement that connects the producers of goods and the consumers of them. This movement is called Fair Trade.

On September 14, 2010, a coffee farmer from El Salvador named Pedro Ascencio came to the Willimantic Food Co-op to talk about Equal Exchange and fair trade. Equal Exchange is a very helpful company that is involved in Fair Trade. For example, it was Equal Exchange that helped Las Colinas (the small farming town that Señor Ascencio comes from) to get better prices for their goods so that they can build new schools, churches, an irrigation system, and even a soccer field.



Señor Ascencio talks about his life in El Salvador. Photo taken by Lydia Russell.



Las Colinas is marked by: ★
Photo from infoplease.com.

Locally produced food, from page 1

MK CAN interviewed Shundahai Farm. Shundahai farm is a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), which means that instead of just selling their crops at markets, their customers pay ahead at the beginning of the season for a share of the year's crop. That means that each week customers can come and get what's in season. When MK C-A-N interviewed Edward Wazer and Raluca Mocanu of Shundahai, we got lots of information about farming and what they do.

Ask the Expert

MKids C-A-N: Why did you start a vegetable farm?

Shundahai: To provide the healthiest food possible for our children, to provide food to people from a local source in an environmentally-friendly method, to be outside, connected to the earth, and to be an example of living simply.

MKids C-A-N: Why did you start a CSA?

Shundahai: We needed a new venue for selling vegetables and people really liked the idea of a CSA. We like it ourselves because we have a greater connection to our customers than we do at Farmers' Markets. A CSA is also great for the farmer because we asked our customers before the season started what vegetables they would like, which helped us with our planting schedule.

MKids C-A-N: Who are your customers?

Shundahai: Our customers are primarily people from Mansfield. Most of the remaining customers are from the surrounding towns. We wanted customers that would be driving by and not making a long trip just to pick up vegetables, and that is the case with almost everyone.

MKids C-A-N: How are CSAs better for the Earth?

Shundahai: Our customers get an understanding of what it means to eat in season. Eggplants are available in mid- to late-summer, not in January. We are helping to promote the idea that food should be eaten in season, not shipped thousands of miles, simply because it is possible.

MKids C-A-N: What is your best crop?

Shundahai: Well...we like all our crops for different reasons. Our radishes and turnips amaze us with how fast they grow. Cherry tomatoes are great for snacking on. The lettuces are available almost the entire year. The leaf-size of squash plants is astounding...

MKids C-A-N: What are your biggest challenges?

Shundahai: There is very little profit in vegetable farming: seeds, compost, fencing, hay, taxes, tractors, fuel, etc... We need to be very aware of our expenses (and minimize them) in order to remain financially viable.

MK C~A~N: How can kids get involved in CSAs?

Shundahai: Ask for a farm tour. Read about the problems farmers have and discuss them in home and school. An example is the use of pesticides around the home. This is one source of insecticides that are harming the honeybees that pollinate many crops.

For further information about Mansfield Farms and locally produced food, contact the agricultural committee at Mansfieldct.org.



Bicycle safety, from page 2

replace your helmet if you think it may have gotten damaged.

Rules on the Road

If you ever ride on a road, follow these rules (adapted from kidshealth.org):

- Always ride with your hands on the handlebars.
- Always stop and check for traffic in both directions when leaving your driveway, an alley, or a curb.
- Cross at intersections. When you pull out between parked cars, drivers can't see you coming.
- Walk your bike across busy intersections using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.
- Ride on the right-hand side of the street, so you travel in the same direction as cars do. Never ride against traffic.
- Use bike lanes or designated bike routes wherever you can.
- Don't ride too close to parked cars. Doors can open suddenly.
- Stop at all stop signs and obey street (red) lights just as cars do.
- Ride single file on the street with friends.
- When passing other bikers or people on the street, always pass to their left side, and call out "On your left!" so they know that you are coming.

Have Fun! Once you've got the rules mastered, you can focus on having fun and letting the wind rush against your face and hair.



Mansfield Kids CAN Triathlon

The Triathlon is a Mansfield Kids C-A-N Program that helps kids stay healthy and help their environment and community. To participate in the triathlon, you must do one good thing for your health, one good thing for the environment, and one good thing for the community. Once you have completed these tasks, you write them down on a form (available in room 112) and then your name gets put in the newspaper along with some of the things that you did. Here are some of our triathlon participants from summer school, along with a description of what *they* did:

Katie Brown She picked up trash in her neighborhood, got shavings for the pet store, and swam a lap in the MCC pool.

Katya Hunt She cleaned trails, helped animals, and hiked.

Julia Hall She recycled, car pooled, and exercised.

If you are interested in contributing to or writing for Mansfield Kids Can, please contact either Ms. McCormick at MMS or the editor at mansfieldkidscan@yahoo.com.